AMENDED CLAIMS

[Received at the International Bureau on November 17, 1999; original claims 1-26 replaced by amended, new claims 1-18 (5 pages)]

1. A message exchange (1) for receiving and storing spoken messages and for transmitting these messages to one or more subscribers (21-24), to whom the messages are addressed, in the public switched telephone network (2), with which the message exchange (1) is connected, wherein

it comprises an address module (4) in order to store a plurality of lists (41) with subscriber identifications (N, R), the said lists (41) being assigned in each case to at least one subscriber (21-24) in the said telephone network (2), and in the said address module (4) at least certain subscriber identifications (n1, n2, r1, r2) in a said list (41) of a subscriber being combined into a group (g1),

it comprises a receiving module (3) in order to receive said messages from subscribers (21-24) in the said telephone network (2) via this said telephone network (2) and store them in each case together with an identification (S) of the subscriber who has placed the message (M),

it comprises a speech recognition module (8), which makes it possible for a subscriber to determine by means of spoken language subscribers and/or groups of subscribers to whom or which a message is supposed to be addressed,

it comprises a transmission module (5) in order to transmit stored messages (M) by means of automatic call to the determined subscribers and/or groups of subscribers, and

it comprises a reply module (7) for receiving and storing replies of a subscriber to whom messages were transmitted.

2. The message exchange (1) according to the preceding claim, wherein the said speech recognition module (8) makes it possible for a subscriber to create and to administer the said lists (41) by means of spoken language.

3. The message exchange (1) according to one of the preceding claims,

wherein a said subscriber identification comprises the name (n1, n2, n3) of the respective subscriber.

4. The message exchange (1) according to one of the preceding claims, wherein a said subscriber identification comprises the call number (r1, r2, r3) of the respective subscriber.

5. The message exchange (1) according to one of the preceding claims, wherein at least certain of the said subscriber identifications (N, R, G) are stored as voice signals.

6. The message exchange (1) according to one of the preceding claims, wherein it comprises at least one tariff table (9), which makes it possible for the said transmission module (5) to transmit at least certain messages at times having economical tariffs.

7. The message exchange (1) according to one of the preceding claims, wherein it comprises a table (61) with statistical information on the traffic load in the said telephone network (2), which makes it possible for the said transmission module (5) to transmit at least certain messages at times of low traffic load.

8. The message exchange (1) according to one of the preceding claims, wherein the said reply module (7) can receive as reply, store and transmit to the addressed subscribers messages from a subscriber to whom messages were sent, which messages can be addressed to a group of subscribers.

9. The message exchange (1) according to one of the preceding claims, wherein a said list (41) also contains access rights.

10. A method of receiving and storing spoken messages and of transmitting these messages to one or more subscribers (21-24) in the public switched telephone network (2) wherein

a plurality of lists (41) with subscriber identifications (N, R), are stored in a message exchange (1) connected to the said telephone network (2), the lists (41) being assigned in each case to at least one subscriber (21-24) in the said

telephone network (2), and at least certain subscriber identifications (n1, n2, r1, r2) in a said list (41) of a subscriber being combined in a group (g1),

in the message exchange (1), messages of subscribers (21-24) in the public switched telephone network (2) are received via the said telephone network (2) and are stored in each case together with an identification of the subscriber (S), who has given the message (M),

subscribers address messages to subscribers and/or groups of subscribers by designating to the message exchange (1) the respective subscribers or groups of subscribers by means of spoken language,

a speech recognition module (8) in the message exchange (1) identifies in the said list (41) of the respective subscriber the said subscribers and/or groups of subscribers designated by the subscriber,

stored messages (M) are transmitted by the message exchange (1) by means of automatic call to the identified subscribers and/or groups of subscribers, and

replies of a subscriber, to whom messages were transmitted, are received and stored by the message exchange (1).

11. The method according to the preceding claim, wherein at least certain of the said subscriber identifications (N, R, G) are stored as voice signal.

12. The method according to one of the claims 10 to 11, wherein status information is stored concerning the transmission of messages to subscribers, and messages not successfully transmitted can be repeatedly transmitted.

13. The method according to one of the claims 10 to 12, wherein at least one tariff table (9) is monitored, and at least certain messages are transmitted to addressed subscribers at economical tariff times.

14. The method according to one of the claims 10 to 13, wherein statistical information on the traffic load in the said telephone network (2) is stored in a table (61), and at least certain messages are transmitted to the addressed subscribers at times of low traffic load.

15. The method according to one of the claims 10 to 14, wherein at least

certain messages are transmitted via the Internet.

16. The method according to one of the claims 10 to 15, wherein messages from a subscriber to whom messages were sent are received as reply, stored and transmitted to the addressed subscribers, which messages can be addressed to a group of subscribers.

17. The method according to one of the claims 10 to 16, wherein the said lists (41) are administered by means of spoken language by at least certain subscribers.

18. A computer-readable data carrier which contains coded data which represent a computer program, which program makes it possible to control a message exchange (1) according to one of the claims 1 to 9 in such a way that it carries out a method according to one of the claims 10 to 17.

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